



# How To Series

## Visual Tools

Revised June 2013

# PowerPoint®

## Design Basics- The Rule of Thirds

### What Is It?

#### What is PowerPoint?

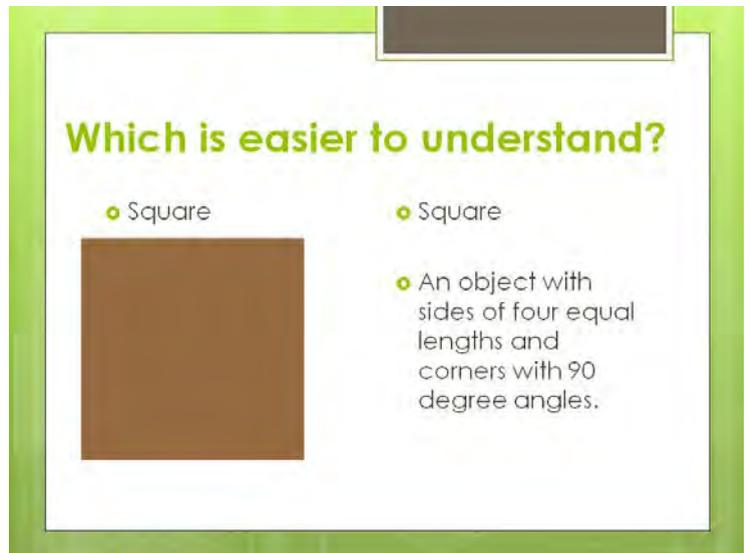
Microsoft PowerPoint® is one of the top computer software programs for creating and presenting information.

#### How Does it Work?

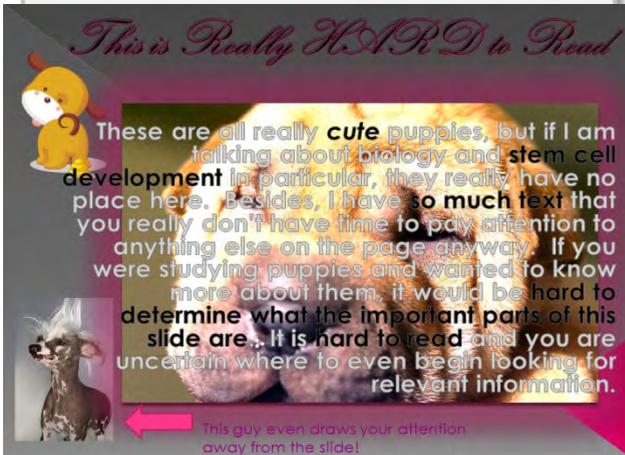
You may access templates for presentation through the installed program on your PC or Mac.

PowerPoint® presentations can be used to create not only slide presentations, but also newsletters or web pages. Music or other auditory files can be added to create a product similar to a photo album for burning to CD or DVD format. This PDF was created in PowerPoint®.

Follow the **RULE OF THIRDS**—no more than three colors, three typeface styles, three groups, three bullet points (four at most), three lines of text. Keep design principles at a minimum.



### What Not To Do:



Be **PURPOSEFUL** in your use of graphic design elements. Consider emphasis, clarity, key points, important phrases, and the impact of visuals in your presentation. Create a logical flow through a clear purpose.

Emphasize **WHITE SPACE** on the slide. As a design element, having enough empty space is crucial for visual contrast. A white background provides a key contrast to dark typeface on a presentation slide. Blank areas on the slide contrast with important text or images.

Follow **PRINCIPLES OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN**. Colors and movement can be very distracting to all of us but more so to those with even minimal disability. Movement and sound in a presentation should be there for a content-related purpose.

Avoid decoration. Decorative and graphically 'busy' backgrounds are highly distracting **as shown to the left**. This slide presents unnecessary stimuli that the viewer must process. The text is difficult to read and your eye is not sure where on the page to look first. There is no white space and the relationship of the photos to the identified topic of stem cell development is unclear.

#### Student Involvement Tip:

As you prepare your slides, build in places for students to interact with the content. Clicker Questions, [Poll Everywhere](#), or small group assignments interspersed throughout your slides encourage active learning.

How can we help others remember, analyze and synthesize most efficiently? One simple thing we can do is organize and present content in a way that makes sense to students.

Since it is the job of our central nervous system to make sense of the world around us, our brains are always trying to construct a story of our experiences. Help your students participate in your journey by giving it a clear beginning, middle and end with pit stops along the way that tie back to your opening outline.

Research shows we remember first and last elements of a presentation most readily due to the Primacy and Recency effect of our brain's processing mechanisms. As a result, the most important points of your lesson should hold these spots in the presentation. Making good use of **boldface**, **highlights**, or *italics* can also draw attention to important points.

Memory functions best by "chunking" information into a limited number of groups (Kosslyn suggests no more than four, although, for each unit, we can organize four subgroups in a hierarchical structure). We store long-term memories in more than one specific location in our brains, so words and images may get stored in different places. Giving students text and then presenting comparable images doubles the chances of memory.

Students 'hook' new information onto prior knowledge through complex processes called assimilation, accommodation and scaffolding, improving our retention of information as a result. Making lectures relevant to students means, in part, that we help them build connections with their prior knowledge. Surveying students before or during a presentation to determine what they already know and can help build these connections.

Getting students involved in the process by asking questions (using clickers or other tools such as Poll Everywhere) promotes active learning. Actively thinking about a topic helps us remember it better. Having short breaks during lectures for students to compare notes or confer with their neighbor is another active process that allows for new information to begin to solidify.

## REFERENCES

Kosslyn, Stephen. 2007. Clear and to the point: 8 psychological principles for compelling PowerPoint® presentations. NY: Oxford UP.

Kosslyn, Stephen. 2011. Better PowerPoint®. NY: Oxford UP.

Garr, Reynolds. 2008. Presentation Zen: Simple Ideas on Presentation Design and Delivery. Berkeley, CA: New Riders P.



Click to Play

## How do I best Use PowerPoint®?

1. Keep it simple! Use easy-to-read, large fonts, preferably sans serif. Dark text on a light background is easiest to read.
2. No fancy stuff please! Align text right or left, but avoid centering text unless it is the focal point of the slide and is a quote or definition. Slides are your cue cards. Using your PowerPoint® as your own personal set of notes puts WAY too much information on the slide. Avoid large blocks of text. Putting no more than three points on a slide, prevents slides that are too cluttered and hard to read.
3. Have notes. Keeping a set of notes to reference is helpful since the slides are only an outline. It also helps you avoid the pitfalls of not having a plan for the class session.
4. Use images responsibly. Visuals can add to the learning environment or distract from it. While random clip art for cuteness' sake is poor practice, visuals can be quite valuable to summarize a "wordy" slide. Place a visual slide after the wordy one (if, in fact, you **MUST** use a wordy one) to allow students time to absorb and reflect on the concept presented.
5. It's not ALL about the slides. Keep in mind that the slides are a visual aid in and of themselves. YOU are the main attraction. Dress and speak in a professional manner.
6. Make sure the lighting in the room does not interfere with good viewing of the slides. If you cannot adjust the light, adjust your slides.
7. Be Active! When we use slides, there is a tendency to slip into lecture mode. Balance the temptation by building in activity along the way. This may be through small group assignments or clicker type questions embedded in the slides themselves.

## Additional Resources

Katt, J., et al. (2008). Establishing Best Practices for the Use of PowerPoint™ as a Presentation Aid Retrieved 10, June, 2013, 2013, from <http://www.uab.edu/Communicationstudies/humancommunication/11.2.5.pdf>

Teaching and Learning Center, University of Oregon. Presenting With PowerPoint. Retrieved 10, June 2013 from <http://tep.uoregon.edu/technology/powerpoint/docs/presenting.pdf>

Beth White Bigler (2013)